

Office of City Auditor

**CITY OF SEATTLE
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES**

September 27, 1999

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The Honorable Paul Schell
Seattle City Councilmembers
City of Seattle
Seattle, Washington 98104-1876

Dear Mayor Schell and City Councilmembers:

Attached is our report on the City of Seattle Citizen Participation Processes. The report focuses on City neighborhood-based public involvement processes, with an emphasis on neighborhood budgeting and planning.

Our conclusion was that the City has established effective neighborhood budgeting and planning processes. The processes were generally consistent with the intent of Ordinance 27709 that authorized the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program in 1987, and Resolution 29015 that created a planning framework to respond to growth issues in designated urban villages. The information provided by Seattle citizens through neighborhood budgeting and planning efforts has been useful to City officials in decision-making processes.

The audit contains findings and recommendations to refine the neighborhood involvement structure and better integrate City and neighborhood efforts to encourage consistent and broad representation of community groups in neighborhood processes. In addition, the City should clarify City and citizens' roles and responsibilities for neighborhood involvement efforts, particularly as new processes are developed.

We received excellent cooperation from City departments and citizen representatives throughout our review process. The Department of Neighborhoods, the former Office of Neighborhood Planning, and the Seattle Transportation Department management and staff as well as City Neighborhood Council (CNC) and CNC Budget Review Committee representatives provided comments on a draft report that were incorporated into the final report. The Department of Neighborhoods' response generally concurs with the audit's findings and recommendations provided in Appendix 5. Our comments on the Department of Neighborhoods' response are provided in Appendix 6.

Sincerely,

Susan Cohen

Attachment

Office of City Auditor

CITY OF SEATTLE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

September 27, 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Seattle citizens have been engaged at all levels of government to provide information and input on important City policy and administrative issues. Citizen participation activities have also been integrated with City budgeting and neighborhood planning processes for more than 20 years, and strengthened during the past 10 years with the establishment of neighborhood-based public involvement models.

This study reviews City of Seattle citizen participation practices related to decision-making on capital investments in the community. The study focuses on two citizen participation processes:

- Neighborhood Budgeting – This biennial process provides a mechanism for the 13 neighborhood districts, including the community groups within the districts, to prioritize City proposed major maintenance projects based upon neighborhood values and interests.
- Neighborhood Planning – This process involved a collaborative effort by the City, the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, and Neighborhood Planning Committees to develop neighborhood plans for 37 urban villages¹ during the past four years. The plans also reflect neighborhood values and interests as well as priorities for future capital investments in City neighborhoods.

The study also addresses some fundamental issues regarding the Department of Neighborhood's public involvement structure and other issues relevant to City public involvement processes.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The City of Seattle has established effective neighborhood-based public involvement processes. The processes were generally consistent with the criteria for building effective City-neighborhood partnerships published in *The New Public Innovator* (Winter 1999), and with the intent of Ordinance 27709 that authorized the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program in 1987. These processes provided neighborhood groups with an active role in identifying major maintenance budget priorities and in developing neighborhood plans and capital priorities that reflect important neighborhood values and needs. In addition, the information provided by Seattle citizens through the neighborhood budgeting and planning efforts was used by City officials in decision-making processes.

Despite the effectiveness of the processes in accomplishing significant City and neighborhood objectives, the neighborhood-based models could still be improved. Material improvements include:

1) ensuring consistent and broad representation of neighborhood groups; 2) streamlining participation requirements to reduce the time and administrative burdens on neighborhood groups; and 3) promoting equity in allocating financial, education/training, and staff resources to neighborhoods to support City-initiated activities. These improvements are likely to minimize the proliferation of new neighborhood groups and competing demands for City resources while promoting reasonable expectations for citizen involvement.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Excellent progress has been made in developing a useful and straightforward structure to provide neighborhood districts with an active role in determining major maintenance budget priorities, and

¹The term urban village is used to describe neighborhoods that were facing substantial growth and related changes.

communicating those priorities to City officials. City agencies and neighborhoods sense that the current process is effective because it realistically considers neighborhood choices in relation to City practices and financial resources.

However, the neighborhood budget process could be strengthened to promote accountability and representation of all neighborhood groups in prioritizing major maintenance projects. Additional financial and staff resources are also required to broaden neighborhood outreach efforts and validation of the neighborhoods' prioritized project listings.

2. An effective neighborhood planning process led to successful completion of neighborhood plans, which provided strategies to accommodate greater growth and identified priorities for future capital investments in 37 designated urban villages. In addition, the plans led to numerous "quick" wins and neighborhood improvements, which were implemented both before and after the completion of the neighborhood plans. The plans were also consistent with the primary objectives set forth in Resolution 27709.

As the plans age, it will be important to provide future opportunities for all neighborhood groups to revise and refine their priorities for planned capital investments. Information could also be routinely disseminated to the existing neighborhood and community groups regarding the guidelines for allocating funds for neighborhood planning priorities, the timing of proposed neighborhood capital improvements, and the potential development impacts on communities outside the planning boundaries to promote an inclusive and clear plan implementation process.

3. Neighborhood groups were concerned about the existing neighborhood involvement structure and raised questions about the City's expectations for effective citizen involvement. The following are examples of fundamental and recurring issues for citizens involved in various neighborhood involvement processes:
 - An inordinate amount of staff and neighborhood volunteer time is required for the neighborhood involvement structure to work effectively, and to channel information up and down between the City and community groups. As a result, it is tempting to allow one citizen or a small group of citizens to assume the lead on issues. Ultimately, a disconnect surfaces between the City Neighborhood Council (CNC)/District Councils and grass roots groups, which leads to complaints about the CNC/District Councils' actions and lack of representation of the grass roots interests.
 - Multiple City departments have initiated neighborhood programs, sometimes without clearly defined processes, volunteer training and resources. Because the responsibility for many City citizen involvement processes rests with the Department of Neighborhoods, citizens turn to the Department when issues surface. However, the Department of Neighborhoods lacks the expertise and resources to properly support processes developed by other City agencies.
 - Neighborhood participation models and application processes for neighborhood funds are labor-intensive and raise unrealistic neighborhood expectations about the resources available for improvements. Neighborhood groups initially become involved in City processes when new financial resources are made available, but later realize that the amount of funds for each neighborhood district covers only one or two minor improvements. Ultimately, the neighborhoods develop a "so this is it" or "all that for this" attitude as interest wanes.
 - Conversely, the substantial financial resources and dedicated staffing resources allocated to select neighborhood involvement processes create a perception of disparity among the other neighborhood groups. The perception is intensified by unfavorable comparisons of processes largely driven by neighborhood groups with limited City resources to elaborate City-driven processes that are well

financed. Interest was expressed in an objective cost benefit analysis for various neighborhood involvement processes and an allocation of future resources based on realistic process steps and outcomes.

- Seattle citizens and staff are concerned about the City's expectations for neighborhood involvement as new citizen and community forums are established in response to City initiatives. Citizens would like to be informed if the existing processes are no longer viable and given an opportunity to become involved in newly established processes. Ideally, citizens and staff would like the City's processes to be integrated into a manageable structure for all interest groups.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Department of Neighborhoods should refine the neighborhood involvement structure to improve accessibility and open communications among the City Neighborhood Council, District Councils, Neighborhood Planning Stewards and all other community groups. The improved structure should consider the actual time demands on neighborhood leaders and grass roots community groups to participate effectively in City-initiated activities.
 2. The Budget Committee of the CNC should conduct a cost effective "validation" process after the initial neighborhood district ballots are tallied to ensure that all community groups have an additional opportunity to provide input on the initial prioritized listing of major maintenance projects in their neighborhoods. Similarly, as the neighborhood plans age, all neighborhood groups should be given the opportunity to review and discuss the prioritization of proposed capital investments.
 3. The Department of Neighborhoods should clarify the roles and responsibilities for the existing neighborhood committees and community groups and establish appropriate communication links to better integrate new groups that are formed in response to City initiatives. Existing neighborhood committees and community groups should be encouraged to join new processes at any time.
 4. Prior to initiating new citizen involvement processes, the City should ensure that the new processes are well defined and that adequate resources are available for citizen education/training as well as for the completion of significant activities. In addition, City applications for neighborhood resources should be streamlined to ensure that the demands on citizens are commensurate with the level of resources provided by the City for the neighborhoods.
 5. The Department of Neighborhoods should conduct a cost benefit analysis of the existing neighborhood processes to determine whether the process steps and outcomes are reasonable in relation to the time, costs, and resources provided to accomplish City and neighborhood objectives. The Department should be provided the resources necessary for the cost benefit analysis and for improved integration of neighborhood involvement processes and groups.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study reviews citizen participation practices in the City of Seattle that have strengthened decision-making related to capital investments in the community. The study focuses on two citizen participation processes—neighborhood budgeting and planning—developed by the City to obtain citizen input on community values and conditions. In addition, the study addresses some fundamental issues regarding the Department of Neighborhoods’ public involvement structure and model and other relevant neighborhood involvement processes.

Neighborhood Involvement Structure Established

The City of Seattle has a rich tradition of engaging its citizens at all levels of government, and has established award-winning citizen participation models. Seattle citizens have provided general information to City decision-makers on a myriad of important policy and administrative issues that range from community crime prevention/reduction programs to rate setting for public utilities. Citizen information and participation activities have also been integrated with City budgeting and neighborhood planning processes for more than 20 years. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the citizen participation goals and objectives that were tied to the adopted 1999-2000 biennial budget for City agencies.

During the past ten years, Seattle strengthened its public participation process by establishing a neighborhood involvement structure for neighborhood-based citizen groups. These groups include community councils, business associations and other organizations that identify themselves with a particular neighborhood. All City neighborhoods are represented by more than one group, often with different and sometimes opposing interests.

Evolution of Seattle Neighborhood Budgeting and Planning Policies and Processes

Resolution 27709, adopted in 1987, established the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program to: 1) provide neighborhoods with resources for planning and development that reflected neighborhood values and needs; 2) design City plans and programs to meet the diverse character and development patterns of the City’s neighborhoods; 3) strengthen and coordinate City responses to neighborhood concerns and requests for assistance; 4) foster cooperation and consensus among diverse interests within neighborhoods and encourage constructive resolution of issues involving neighborhood groups, prospective developers and the City; and 5) facilitate communications between neighborhoods regarding common concerns.

Resolution 27709 also established Neighborhood District Councils and the City Neighborhood Council, then comprised of one elected residential and one elected business representative from each of the 12 Neighborhood District Councils, now the chairs or designees of each of the 13 District Councils with the creation of the Downtown Neighborhood Council. The City Neighborhood Council was specifically responsible for developing recommendations on City budget issues, including the general fund, capital and block grant budget, and the Neighborhood Matching Fund, and for advising on the implementation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program.

Attachment A, Section 5, of Resolution 27709 further delineated the responsibilities of the City, the City Neighborhood Council and the District Councils regarding the budget review. The City was responsible for creating opportunities and procedures for neighborhood review of the City budget and for the neighborhoods to initiate budget proposals for neighborhood projects. In addition, the City was responsible for producing budget information by neighborhood district or neighborhood and for considering the

recommendations of the City Neighborhood Council and neighborhood groups in developing the budget. The City was also responsible for providing a report to the neighborhoods containing department responses to neighborhood budget initiatives, and for responding to the City Neighborhood Council's budget recommendations in the Mayor's budget recommendations to the Council.

Attachment A, Section 6, of Resolution 27709 also identified the neighborhood planning responsibilities for the City, City Neighborhood Council and District Councils. The City was responsible for expanding opportunities for neighborhood planning and resources through the Neighborhood Matching Fund to support the preparation of neighborhood plans by community councils and business district organizations. The Department of Neighborhoods, in consultation with the Planning Commission, the City Neighborhood Council and District Councils, was responsible for preparing criteria for allocation of resources, standards for directing plan preparation, and procedures for City review and approval of neighborhood plans.

Resolution 29015, adopted in 1994, responded to the neighborhood planning representation and accountability issues, while creating a framework to respond to City growth issues in designated urban villages within the established neighborhood districts. The neighborhood planning process allowed the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life by: 1) helping people achieve their neighborhoods' goals; 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established City-wide goals; and 3) creating an environment that encourages building of community with neighborhoods. Section 2 of Resolution 29015 also established 11 principles to guide the highly collaborative City-community partnership in developing the neighborhood plans.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This study was limited to the review of two citizen participation processes that were developed and integrated into the City's decisions on neighborhood planning and budgeting. Audit staff reviewed and analyzed relevant Washington State laws, City of Seattle ordinances and resolutions, and the policies, procedures, directives, budgets and guidelines developed to encourage public involvement and input into City decision-making processes. We also interviewed elected officials, managers, staff and citizens who actively worked with or served on the Neighborhood Planning Committees and CNC Budget Review Committee.

In addition, audit staff obtained substantial information on citizen participation from the 1999 American Society for Public Administration National Conference. Conference speakers frequently referred to Seattle's nationally recognized public involvement models during their presentations, including the use of those models to develop citizen participation programs in their local government agencies.

During our review process, the City Council provided funding for an extensive survey and evaluation of citizen participation, and participated with the Executive in the development of a scope of work. The pending study will be conducted by the Seattle Planning Commission and a consultant, and will assess the effectiveness of the existing citizen participation processes. In addition, the study will include recommendations on the Department of Neighborhoods' role in promoting and supporting future citizen participation.

While our study is limited to the review of only two citizen participation processes, it does provide an analysis based upon objective criteria for effective City neighborhood partnerships. The study of the City's citizen participation processes was performed between December 1998 and April 1999 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

CHAPTER 2: EFFECTIVE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

Effective citizen participation processes result in better public decisions by improving the quality of information available to decision-makers. Citizen participation provides access to vital information that may not be obtained in any other way, such as knowledge of specific neighborhood conditions or concerns. Citizen participation can also resolve differences and even create legitimacy for decision-making processes by helping decision-makers develop compromises necessary to gain public acceptance on important City policies. Citizen participation also helps decision-makers avoid unsatisfactory or unfavorable decisions.²

Seattle citizens have provided valuable information to City officials and departments through neighborhood planning efforts and prioritization of major maintenance projects. Chapter 2 examines the effectiveness of two neighborhood processes:

- Neighborhood Budgeting – This biennial process provides a mechanism for the 13 neighborhood districts, including the community groups within the districts, to prioritize City proposed major maintenance projects based upon neighborhood values and interests.
- Neighborhood Planning – This process involved a collaborative effort by the City, the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, and Neighborhood Planning Committees to develop neighborhood plans for 37 urban villages during the past four years. The plans also reflect neighborhood values and interests as well as priorities for future capital investments in City neighborhoods.

The effectiveness of both processes are evaluated based on the criteria for building effective City-neighborhood partnerships published in The New Public Innovator (Winter 1999).

It should be noted that the neighborhood planning and budgeting processes are vastly different in terms of group composition, scope of responsibility, and level of accountability in representing the community. In addition, the financial resources and staff support for the neighborhood budgeting and planning processes vary significantly in relation to the products developed by both groups. Despite these important differences, both processes have effectively accomplished significant City and neighborhood objectives.

Initial Neighborhood Budgeting and Planning Opportunities and Processes Were Ineffective

According to the City Budget Office and the Department of Neighborhoods, the initial opportunities for citizen involvement in City budgeting and planning, created in response to Resolution 27709, were unwieldy. As a result, neighborhood budgeting and planning input was often fragmented and City departments did not consistently provide feedback on neighborhood requests.

The CNC and District Councils were also unable to meet the crucial objectives of fostering cooperation and consensus within neighborhoods to resolve issues. Based upon extensive surveys and interviews, the Planning Commission concluded in its first five-year evaluation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program that District Councils were not functioning consistently in terms of the scope of their roles and responsibilities. Only a few District Councils coordinated activities among neighborhood organizations or became a voice for the entire district.³ In fact, numerous City of Seattle and neighborhood representatives indicated that the CNC and a few District Councils had virtually fallen apart by 1994, when

²League of Women Voters of Seattle, "Citizen Participation in Seattle City Government," 1994.

³Seattle Planning Commission, "Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program Evaluation Report: Looking at the First Five Years," June, 1994.

the Planning Commission conducted the first five-year evaluation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program in 1994.

Neighborhood budgeting and planning policy was strengthened subsequent to the Planning Commission's evaluation of the implementation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program.⁴ Resolution 29015, adopted in 1994, responded to the neighborhood planning representation and accountability issues, while creating a framework to respond to City growth issues in designated urban villages within the established neighborhood districts.

As noted in Chapter 1, the enhanced neighborhood planning process allowed the City and the community to work in partnership to achieve neighborhood goals; involved the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established Citywide goals; and promoted building a community within neighborhoods. Section 2 of Resolution 29015 also established 11 principles to guide the highly collaborative City-community partnership in developing the neighborhood plans.

In addition, a Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee was established, with representatives from each neighborhood district council area, two Planning Commission members, and six individuals selected by the Department of Neighborhoods Director, to provide diversity and a City-wide perspective. The Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee and 37 Neighborhood Planning Committees, with representatives from the designated urban villages, worked closely with the Neighborhood Planning Office throughout the planning effort.

Efforts were also undertaken in 1995 to respond to neighborhood budgeting process and representation issues. The CNC Budget Review Committee began collaborating with the City Budget Office on an improved neighborhood budgeting process to strengthen neighborhood involvement in budget matters. Specific concerns were addressed, including the lack of uniform budget requests from neighborhood districts; inadequate District Council representation of all neighborhood groups; unrealistic community expectations given the City's limited resources, particularly for capital improvements; and the extensive number of neighborhood budget requests that created labor-intensive reviews for City agencies. (The majority of neighborhood budget requests were either for work that City departments routinely handled through ongoing workloads, or for capital projects that the City was unable to fund.)

Restructured CNC Budget Review Process Led to Effective Neighborhood Budgeting Forum and Citizen Input in the Prioritization of Major Maintenance Projects

In 1995, the CNC Budget Committee redirected its focus from general neighborhood budget reviews and requests to neighborhood review and prioritization of proposed major maintenance projects during the City's biennial budget process. In addition, Seattle Budget Priorities Conferences were established to provide open forums for City departments and neighborhoods to exchange information on major maintenance priorities and to further engage citizens in prioritizing projects considered important to neighborhood districts. These two neighborhood budget activities currently provide a direct mechanism for neighborhood involvement in the City's biennial budget process.

⁴Resolution 28115, adopted by the Council in 1994, reduced the number of members on the CNC to make meetings more manageable and increase the likelihood of achieving a quorum. The resolution also expanded the opportunities for neighborhood planning and the financial resources available through the Neighborhood Matching Fund to support community initiated capital improvements. The resolution also specifically directed the Office of Neighborhoods to develop criteria for the allocation of such resources, standards for directing plan preparation, and procedures for the City review and approval of neighborhood plans.

Essentially, the CNC Budget Committee prioritizes, by neighborhood, major maintenance projects that are pre-selected by City departments on the basis of safety, cost and urgency criteria. Specific process steps and the scope of the CNC Budget Committee review varied during the past two biennial budget review cycles. For example, the CNC Budget Committee did not prioritize transportation maintenance projects during the 1999-00 budget review because a commitment was previously made by the City to fund the top priority maintenance projects. Briefly, the process followed by the CNC Budget Committee during its 1999-2000 budget review was as follows:

- Reorganized and reformatted computerized records developed by the Executive Services and Parks Departments to develop a unique listing of major maintenance projects for each of the 13 Neighborhood Districts.
- Distributed the neighborhood project listings to the 13 neighborhood districts for review and prioritization.
- Organized and sponsored the Seattle Budget Priorities Conference attended by City officials, District Council representatives, community representatives and citizens.
- Consolidated the 13 District Councils' prioritized parks and facilities projects and submitted them to the Executive Services and Parks Departments for final consideration.
- Reviewed the Mayor's proposed budget to determine which projects were recommended, and developed strategies to gain Council support for select neighborhood projects.

Two-thirds of the CNC Budget Committee's major maintenance project recommendations were incorporated into the 1999-2000 parks and facilities major maintenance budgets. Complete equity in the number of projects ultimately funded by the City in each neighborhood district was not possible due to amount of funds necessary to complete certain projects and the varying number of City facilities located in each neighborhood district. Through the development of the collaborative budget review framework and the actual budget reviews, neighborhood districts have an improved understanding of the limitations City government faces, as reflected in a 74 percent reduction in the number of neighborhood budget requests from the 1995-96 biennium to the 1999-2000 biennium. In fact, the CNC Budget Review Committee and community groups were generally pleased with the City's final decisions despite the "necessary trade-offs," which was an important City objective in establishing the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program.

Neighborhood Budgeting Process Is Generally Consistent with Criteria for Building Effective City-Neighborhood Partnerships Although Broader Representation Is Needed

A Winter 1999 article in The New Public Innovator highlights requirements for building effective City-neighborhood partnerships that largely focuses on Seattle's neighborhood matching fund program. However, the criteria for effective neighborhood partnerships also provide an objective context for evaluating the neighborhood budgeting processes (please see page 9 for a similar review of the neighborhood planning process). The effective partnership criteria identified in The New Public Innovator are presented below, in underlined text, along with the corresponding elements for the neighborhood budgeting process.

- **Start small and look for quick wins.** The current neighborhood budgeting process is straightforward and can be easily understood as new representatives assume City Neighborhood Council and District

Council positions. An example of a quick win was the City's decision to complete each of the 13 street resurfacing projects identified by the 13 District Councils during the 1996 budget review process. Other wins accomplished through the neighborhood budget process were the City's re-prioritization of important neighborhood projects, including the Magnuson Park Seawall and Hiawatha Community Center.

- **Keep efforts moving forward to win trust from both residents and city officials.** Members of the Budget Committee of the CNC actively worked to keep the neighborhood budget process on track. Committee members currently develop most of the outreach materials, ballots, and final ballot results, as well as meeting schedules and announcements. Committee members also organized the Seattle Priorities Conference and established contacts with City officials and neighborhood groups to encourage participation in the Conference. According to the City Budget Office, both City agencies and neighborhoods are now accustomed to the budget review process and sense that it is effective because it realistically considers neighborhood choices in relation to City practices and financial resources.
- **To win trust from elected officials, broaden participation to allay fears that activists who lack a meaningful constituency will dominate.** Members of the Budget Committee of the CNC acknowledge that greater effort is needed to broaden participation of community groups in the neighborhood budgeting process to assure elected officials that the final neighborhood district ballot results reflect broad community interests. The budget for neighborhood budgeting process was approximately \$1,500 for the 1997-98 biennium and \$2,300 for the 1999-00 biennium, which covered mailings to 600-800 community representatives and expenses associated with the Seattle Priorities Conferences. However, additional cost effective procedures were needed to broaden participation of community groups and to document their preferences.
- **To continue building trust, create regular contact points for residents and department heads, either through regular monthly meetings or neighborhood service centers.** Regular contact points were established and citizens who were listed on the established Neighborhood Service Center mailing lists were notified about significant budgeting activities.
- **Dedicate funding for training to help build skills within chronically under-funded neighborhood groups, giving residents a sense that the city is genuine and bureaucrats a stronger sense that residents are competent.** Although the Department of Neighborhoods provides ongoing training in such topics as leadership development and grants, specific skill development training is not available for neighborhood budgeting. While competent individuals have served on the Budget Committee, budget training could foster broader participation of community groups in the neighborhood budget process.
- **Know your limits. All sides must work to find and recognize limits to what citizens should do, lest efforts merely create another level of bureaucracy.** Again, the current neighborhood budgeting process is very straightforward and economical, and it places significantly fewer demands on City departments and neighborhood volunteers than the demands created by the former budgeting process. The City Budget Office considers the final priority listings to be an important source of information about neighborhood priorities that are used in conjunction with input from Council budget hearings, the strategic budget meetings, and other community and business group meetings to make funding decisions. In addition, City officials now seriously consider the neighborhood district priorities in both

the proposed and adopted biennial budgets, validating the effort made by Seattle citizens to contribute to decision-making processes.

In summary the Budget Committee of the CNC, in collaboration with the City Budget Office and Department of Neighborhoods, made significant progress in developing a useful structure to provide neighborhood districts with an active role in establishing major maintenance budget priorities, and in communicating those priorities to City officials. The current neighborhood budgeting process, which allows for meaningful neighborhood involvement in the City budget process, is also consistent with many of the objectives outlined in Resolution 27709.

Opportunities for Additional Neighborhood Budgeting Process Improvements Were Identified, Including Better Representation and Broader Participation of Neighborhood Groups

Although the current neighborhood budget review process provides an effective model for exchanging budget information between the City and neighborhoods, accountability and representation issues are still a concern of some neighborhood groups. This is an important issue, as noted above, because elected officials must have confidence that the information presented by neighborhood leaders accurately reflects broad neighborhood interests. The CNC Budget Review Committee was aware of the accountability issues, but also noted that current process is limited, including neighborhood outreach, due to the time and resources allocated for its review.

In addition, both City officials and the CNC Budget Review Committee recognized that considerable time is required for communications to flow up and down between the City and the neighborhood group structure, and process deadlines need to be observed that coincide with the City's formal budget process. The following suggestions were made to strengthen neighborhood budgeting practices:

- Ensure coordination between the District Councils, community councils, and planning groups, and provide a voting structure to encourage accountability and representation of all neighborhood groups in prioritizing major maintenance projects.
- Ensure that ballots are cast in an open forum, and attach documentation of the individual neighborhood's group choices in the aggregate neighborhood district priority listing.
- Provide additional financial resources to broaden neighborhood outreach efforts and training opportunities to encourage more citizens to become involved in the neighborhood budget process and in prioritizing the major maintenance projects.
- Provide clear identification of neighborhood districts and neighborhood areas on the initial list of major maintenance projects prepared by City departments, so that the CNC Budget Committee can more quickly prepare and disseminate the major maintenance project priority listings for each neighborhood.

Despite the desire for process improvements, members of the Budget Committee of the CNC believe that they are responsible and accountable for a budget review process that results in specific neighborhood improvements. In addition, the neighborhood budgeting process does provide an opportunity for the City and neighborhood groups to exchange information on proposed major maintenance projects during neighborhood meetings and the Budget Priorities Conference, which meets many of the important objectives of Resolution 27709.

Effective Neighborhood Planning Process Led to Successful Completion of Neighborhood Plans and Early Implementation of Council-Adopted Neighborhood Plans

As noted above, Resolution 29015 established the Neighborhood Planning Program, creating a collaborative partnership between the City and its citizens to develop plans for 37 urban villages. The City's Neighborhood Planning Office was created along with a Neighborhood Advisory Committee to begin defining specific, yet flexible standards and parameters for the creation of neighborhood plans that could be implemented during the next 20 years. An important objective for both the City and the neighborhoods in creating the neighborhood planning process was to promote predictability in development and encourage investment in the neighborhoods. In exchange for neighborhoods' acceptance of the City's guiding principles, including planning for growth in the urban villages, the City committed to incorporating the neighborhood plan recommendations into its operating and capital budget preparation and service delivery systems.

Resolution 29015 also incorporated explicit neighborhood accountability and representation standards into the planning process. Specifically, the 37 Neighborhood Planning Committees were required to develop comprehensive neighborhood plans to guide future development, while including a broad range of stakeholders that represented the diversity of the neighborhoods. Several "check-ins" with the City and the broader community were required upon the completion of major planning phases (work program, draft plan, etc.) to ensure that the planning process was inclusive and met City and neighborhood needs. The City committed approximately \$10 million over a four-year period to develop the neighborhood plans.

While the neighborhood planning process was far more complex than the neighborhood budgeting process, the Neighborhood Planning Office outlined process steps and desired outcomes for each planning phase. Ultimately, each Neighborhood Planning Committee's approach was uniquely designed to accommodate particular interests and needs. However, the planning committees adhered to the basic process steps:

- Identification of planning area boundaries; development of an open, accessible Neighborhood Planning Committee selection processes; and balancing of committee membership to include broad representation of community stakeholders.
- Development of a contractual agreement between the City and Neighborhood Planning Committees that identified outreach plans, neighborhood issues and opportunities, background information, and the schedule for meetings and events to develop the plans. A validation meeting was required at the end of this phase of the planning process.
- Preparation of a scope of work that addressed the needs and interests of community stakeholders while assuring consistency with the core values of the City's comprehensive plan. The scope also included a clear plan of action for Phase II that was legal, feasible, and do-able. The Neighborhood Planning Office evaluated and approved the scopes of work prior to the initiation of the planning effort.
- Development of a draft neighborhood plan in consultation with the City and planning consultants. A second validation meeting was required at the neighborhood level for review, comment, and approval. Issues and comments provided by neighborhood stakeholders during the validation meetings were used to strengthen the draft plans and broaden the base of neighborhood support.

- Preparation of a neighborhood approval and adoption package for Executive and Council review and action, containing the neighborhood plan recommendations and proposed legislative changes in a standard format. Public hearings were held on each plan prior to Council adoption.
- Development of a schedule for plan follow-up and implementation. The City identified staff and neighborhood planning stewards to ensure that adopted plans were implemented, considered in City decisions, and results reported back to the community.

The process steps and milestones, financial resources, and extensive citizen education and training were ultimately well-defined and documented, which contributed to the successful neighborhood planning process.

Neighborhood Planning Process Is Generally Consistent with Criteria for Building Effective City-Neighborhood Partnerships

The neighborhood planning process was generally consistent with criteria for effective neighborhood partnerships described in The New Public Innovator. The effective partnership criteria are presented below, in underlined text, along with the corresponding elements of the neighborhood planning to provide an objective context for evaluating the process.

- **Start small and look for quick wins.** While the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program “started small” in 1987, the recent neighborhood planning process was an extensive, four-year planning process that engaged thousands of Seattle citizens. A well-established neighborhood involvement model, active neighborhood groups, and experience with the Neighborhood Matching Fund process helped to “jump start” the neighborhood planning process. A significant number of quick wins were also sought and accomplished by the Neighborhood Planning Office, City departments and participating neighborhoods prior to the completion of the neighborhood plans. Examples of quick wins ranged from the formation of community arts/culture groups and newsletters; to the preservation of low-income or subsidized family housing units; to numerous street, sidewalk and pedestrian improvements. Some quick wins were accomplished with financial support from the City and other local government agencies, but many wins were accomplished independently. The concept of neighborhoods helping themselves was a primary objective of the Mayor and Council in authorizing the neighborhood planning process.
- **Keep efforts moving forward to win trust from both residents and city officials.** The neighborhood planning process evolved at a slower pace than was initially envisioned. In addition, some neighborhood planning committee members lost confidence in the process due to significant time demands, and delayed City decisions or actions that were not consistently timed to the neighborhood efforts. Neighborhood planning committee membership changed substantially in a few cases. However, new members stepped forward and all the neighborhood plans were completed. In addition, the City worked closely with the neighborhood planning committees to resolve neighborhood issues prior to the completion of the plans, which helped to build or restore the level of trust needed to maintain the planning momentum.
- **To win trust from elected officials, broaden participation to allay fears that activists who lack a meaningful constituency will dominate.** As in the process step above, broad representation was required among the neighborhood planning committees, and validation meetings were required at the conclusion of process steps to promote broad representation throughout the planning process.

- **To continue building trust, create regular contact points for residents and department heads, either through regular monthly meetings or neighborhood service centers.** Neighborhood Planning Project Managers were established as regular contact points for residents and department heads. Both formerly established Neighborhood Service Centers and newly established planning contacts and meeting schedules were available for neighborhood planning purposes.
- **Dedicate funding for training to help build skills within chronically under-funded neighborhood groups, giving residents a sense that the city is genuine and bureaucrats a stronger sense that residents are competent.** An extraordinary amount of City resources and time was allocated to the education and training of neighborhood planning committee members. The Neighborhood Planning Office, in consultation with the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, ultimately identified or developed a “tool box” with more than 90 tools (how-to-guides), consisting of existing and new planning materials, that the committee members used as planning references. Financial resources were also provided to each neighborhood to retain a planning consultant to help in the development of neighborhood plans that reflected neighborhood values and goals.
- **Know your limits. All sides must work to find and recognize limits to what citizens should do, lest efforts merely create another level of bureaucracy.** The neighborhood planning process required the intensive involvement of citizens over a four-year period. While the process yielded outstanding results for many neighborhoods, a perception was created that the process was burdensome for the neighborhood planning groups. (Note that perceptions regarding “arduous” tasks and paperwork were not unique to the neighborhood planning process.)

Other factors also contributed to the success of the neighborhood planning process. For example, a decision-making matrix was developed at the outset of the planning process to clarify which decisions the community would make and which decisions required City action. Substantial financial and staff resources were also provided to each of the participating neighborhoods for neighborhood outreach, committee organization, plan development, validation and implementation. These resources were crucial in maintaining the trust of the neighborhood groups who diligently worked with the City to develop neighborhood plans during the past four years. In fact, the City appropriated \$24 million in the 1999-2000 biennial budget for neighborhoods, including capital investments that will largely be driven by the neighborhood plans. This \$24 million does not include the library funds and capital improvement project funds that will be funded by City departments in response to the neighborhood planning efforts. Thus, the neighborhood planning process was consistent with the initial objectives of Resolution 27709 that led to the establishment of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program.

Opportunities for Neighborhood Planning Process Improvements Were Identified, Particularly Broader Neighborhood Participation in the Plan Implementation Process

As the neighborhood planning process transitions into the implementation phase, it is important to note that the process provided a highly effective model for exchanging information between the City and neighborhoods about their values and goals through the development of planning documents. Each of the five primary objectives outlined in Resolution 27709 were achieved through the planning process. In addition, the plans identify each neighborhood’s capital improvement priorities, and numerous “quick” improvements were made both prior to and subsequent to the completion, review and adoption of the neighborhood plans. However, the neighborhood planning process has largely been accomplished, so the suggested process improvements identified below focus largely on plan implementation issues.

- As the neighborhood plans age, neighborhood representation in plan implementation should be expanded beyond the neighborhood planning stewards for comment or prioritization of planned capital investments. This suggestion recognizes that the number of neighborhood planning committee members that were consistently involved in the actual planning efforts was relatively small (6-12 individuals), even though hundreds of Seattle citizens were generally involved in the development and validation of each neighborhood plan. Broad outreach efforts and representation should be maintained in the future to assure elected officials that the plan implementation process fully represents the diverse neighborhood interests as conditions change and new opportunities arise that were not envisioned during the initial planning period.
- Information should be disseminated to the Planning Stewards, the District Councils and community groups regarding the guidelines for allocating funds to the neighborhood planning priorities and the timing of proposed neighborhood capital improvements. Opportunities for input should also be identified for the communities outside the planning area boundaries.
- Prior to the creation of additional neighborhood committees or processes, information should be provided to the existing neighborhood groups regarding their (changing) roles and responsibilities in relation to the newly formed committee. Efforts should be made to ensure that the new committees or processes are integrated within the existing neighborhood public involvement structure.

Both City Officials and Neighborhood Groups Were Concerned about the Effectiveness of the Neighborhood Council/District Council and Community Council Structure and “Bureaucratic” Demands on Neighborhood Volunteers

After the Planning Commission concluded its first five-year evaluation of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program, the City Neighborhood Council, District Council, and Department of Neighborhoods initiated several improvements to strengthen neighborhood involvement in City processes. For example, the City Neighborhood Council, in cooperation with the Department of Neighborhoods, developed new bylaws for the City Neighborhood Council. In addition, the City Neighborhood Council initiated legislative amendments to reduce the number of District Council representatives to one from each district.

However, concerns continued to be raised about the City Neighborhood Council/District Council and Community Council structure and processes. While some concerns may also be relevant to the neighborhood budgeting and planning processes, the focus is on identifying fundamental and recurring issues regarding the City’s citizen participation models and expectations for neighborhood volunteers.

The CNC/District Council/Community Group model, or Neighborhood Involvement Structure, displayed in Appendix 2, is designed to bring information to the City from the bottom up starting with grass roots groups. When the model works properly, and communications are open and inclusive, valid conclusions can be drawn about the diverse community needs. However, community leaders are required to spend an inordinate amount of time attending numerous meetings for the process to work effectively, and several months may pass before information is channeled up and down between the City, the Neighborhood Council, District Councils, and community groups. If the community leaders do not regularly attend all the meetings, or act without due regard for the community groups they represent, the process reverses and becomes driven “top down.”

Because considerable time and energy is required on behalf of City volunteers (and staff) for the citizen participation model to work effectively, it is tempting to allow one citizen or small group of citizens to assume the lead on issues. Initially, neighborhood representatives are relieved, but disconnects ultimately surface between the CNC/District Council and grass roots groups they represent. The Department of Neighborhoods receives calls from citizen activists at the grass roots level that confirm a lack of understanding about the CNC's actions and lack of representation of the grass roots interests. More effort is needed at the CNC/District Council level to redirect its efforts and communications with grass roots organizations.

The responsibility for many citizen involvement processes rests with the Department of Neighborhoods, although other City departments are also responsible for initiating or approving neighborhood requests. For example, the neighborhood budget review is largely a City Budget Office function and the Neighborhood Street Fund is a Seattle Transportation (SEATLAN) function. If issues arise, the neighborhood groups frequently turn to the Department of Neighborhoods for assistance, but the Department does not control the outcomes for either the major maintenance program or the street fund, nor does the Department of Neighborhoods have the expertise and resources to support those functions properly.

Seattle citizens and staff were also concerned that the City's citizen participation models and application processes for neighborhood funds are volunteer-labor-intensive and sometimes raise unrealistic expectations for the communities. For example, a \$500,000 Neighborhood Street Fund was established several years ago to fund neighborhood improvements above the operating budget. No match was required for the Neighborhood Street Fund projects, which is necessary for Neighborhood Matching Fund projects, so citizens were initially enthusiastic about the Street Fund. More citizens began attending the CNC and District Council meetings to discuss potential projects that could be funded, until they realized that the \$500,000 breaks down to \$30,000-\$50,000 per neighborhood district. In fact, only minor improvements were funded such as traffic circles. Ultimately, the community response was "so this is it" or "all that for this," and community interest waned.

Initially, the Neighborhood Street Fund process also amplified another source of concerns regarding neighborhood involvement programs. Even though the Neighborhood Street Fund process provided SEATLAN with better information about neighborhood priorities and SEATLAN identified additional funds beyond the \$500,000 for street improvements, the neighborhood groups focused on the "burdensome red tape" associated with City application processes. The perception was that citizens' time limitations were not as important as adequate controls for neighborhood funds. Ultimately, the Neighborhood Street Fund process was simplified in collaboration with the City Neighborhood Council, and neighborhood groups considered the process to be reasonable by the end of the third year.

Seattle citizens and staff were concerned about the City's expectations due to the emergence of more neighborhood forums. Community councils have origins dating back to the turn of the century, but current community council members observe more new citizen forums created in their communities in response to City initiatives. In addition, City departments schedule meetings at the same time that neighborhood and community groups have regularly scheduled meetings. Again, many community council members have limited time outside of jobs and families to participate in the new forums or meetings—often because they are attending other City meetings.

Seattle citizens have also expressed frustration about new processes being established without well-defined steps and clear roles and responsibilities for City staff and volunteers. The community groups would like the City to clarify its expectations for the neighborhood groups before new processes are implemented and

provide a mechanism for citizens to become involved in new processes if the established ones are no longer viable. At the same time, neighborhood groups would like the City to also be flexible so the neighborhood could provide input regarding the process and role definitions. Improved definition of expectations, roles and responsibilities will be addressed in depth in the Planning Commission study.

It should be noted that many of the current concerns are similar to the concerns raised by City officials, staff and citizens prior to the development of the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program, including the proliferation of neighborhood groups and mailing lists as well as representation and accountability issues. Consequently, the fundamental objective of fostering cooperation and consensus among diverse interests within neighborhoods, identified in Resolution 27709, does not appear to have been met satisfactorily given the issues raised above by City officials and neighborhood groups. However, significant improvements have been made during the past ten years to strengthen the City's citizen participation processes, and clearly the City and neighborhood groups communicate with one another.

The Department of Neighborhoods, the current CNC and District Councils, and the Planning Commission are exploring additional ways to strengthen communications among the various groups and to improve the representation of all community groups. Given the City's diverse communities and disparate stakeholders within many communities, more realistic, clear and non-conflicting objectives are crucial. For example, a goal of strengthening communications among neighborhood groups to ensure that information provided to elected officials from neighborhoods represents the interests of meaningful but diverse constituencies may conflict with a goal of "fostering" a consensus among diverse neighborhood groups. Some groups also have an expectation that a true consensus should be achieved on complex City issues.

The issues raised above also need to be addressed in the context of the high expectations that the City and its citizens have created through award-winning, nationally recognized citizen participation models. While process improvements are still required, the City and neighborhoods have a fine record of accomplishment and have established a very high standard for other local governments.

Recommendations

1. The Department of Neighborhoods, in cooperation with the Planning Commission, should identify ways to improve the neighborhood involvement model to promote accessibility and open communications between the City Neighborhood Council, District Councils, Neighborhood Planning Stewards and all other community groups. For example, certain meetings could be combined, and information routinely posted on the Department of Neighborhoods web site to keep the neighborhood groups informed of important information or action items. The improved structure should consider the actual time demands on neighborhood leaders and grass roots community groups to participate effectively in City initiated activities.
2. All City departments should better coordinate the scheduling of meetings that require public involvement with the Department of Neighborhoods to minimize, to the extent possible, conflicts with established neighborhood and community group meeting schedules.
3. The CNC Budget Review Committee should obtain broad community support in prioritizing major maintenance projects and consider conducting "validation" meetings after the initial neighborhood district ballots are tallied to ensure that all community groups have an additional opportunity to provide input on the projects selected in their neighborhoods. The Department of Neighborhoods, City Budget Office, and City Neighborhood Council should also consider expanding documentation of community

group ballots and other cost effective measures that can be incorporated into the neighborhood budgeting process to promote better accountability and representation of all neighborhood groups.

4. The City Budget Office, in cooperation with the Department of Neighborhoods, should provide a list of Mayor-proposed major maintenance projects to the CNC Budget Committee when the proposed budget is submitted to the City Council for review and adoption. The City should identify the neighborhoods on both the initial and Mayor-recommended major maintenance project listings.
 5. The Department of Neighborhoods should identify cost effective opportunities for all neighborhood groups to review and discuss the prioritization of future capital investments in neighborhoods, particularly as the neighborhood plans age and more capital resources are made available.
 6. City applications for neighborhood improvement funds should continue to be streamlined to ensure that the demands on citizens are commensurate with the level of resources provided by City departments. Departments responsible for specific citizen involvement processes, such as SEATRAN's Neighborhood Street Fund, should coordinate neighborhood requests and responses through the Department of Neighborhoods to maintain strong communications with all neighborhood groups. Adequate resources should be identified to support coordination activities.
 7. As new City initiatives arise that require extensive neighborhood involvement, the roles and responsibilities of the existing neighborhood committees and community groups should be clarified and communication links defined to better integrate the new groups and processes that are developed. This is particularly important for initiatives developed by other City departments. Existing neighborhood groups should also be encouraged to join in the new processes at any time.
 8. The Department of Neighborhoods should conduct a cost benefit analysis of the existing neighborhood processes to determine whether the process steps and outcomes are reasonable in relation to the time, costs, and resources provided to accomplish City and neighborhood objectives. The Department should be provided the resources necessary for the cost benefit analysis and for improved coordination of City neighborhood involvement processes and groups.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

CITIZEN/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS PROPOSED IN 1999-2000 CITY OF SEATTLE BUDGET

The following excerpts from the City of Seattle 1999-2000 Proposed Budget highlight the Goals, Actions, Results, and Performance Measures and 1999-2000 Actions related to citizen/community involvement in City processes and service delivery.

Arts Commission – Provide arts experiences of the highest caliber for the enrichment of Seattle citizens, increase cultural opportunities for youth, and increase arts opportunities in neighborhood settings to ensure that neighborhood needs are met.

City Light – Deliver excellent customer service and make the public benefits City Light provides in customer and employee communities a cornerstone of its service culture and positive public image while reinstalling confidence in local government.

Design, Construction and Land Use – Increase confidence in local government by reducing regulatory barriers to housing developing; assist in developing Sound Transit stations and surrounding areas in a manner consistent with neighborhood plans and Sound Transit needs; maintain and preserve neighborhood character through implementation of neighborhood plans and City design review.

Economic Development – Improve access to economic opportunities in Seattle's neighborhoods, with particular attention to disadvantaged communities, and link low-income Seattle residents to livable wage employment.

Ethics and Elections – Provide the public with pertinent information about City ethical standards and campaigns.

Executive Services – Provide reliable and responsive service to the public by ensuring customer access to City information and customer satisfaction with access to City information.

Fire – Increase commitment to excellence in delivery of services to customers by improving community relations and recognition for service delivery. Measure customer satisfaction through City-wide resident survey.

Housing – Maintain and increase the City's strong commitment to the development of low-income housing. Increase the supply of housing from shelter to market-rate in neighborhoods that want it and in ways that enhance communities.

Human Services – Meet housing needs of low income/homeless people to eliminate homelessness in Seattle; and strengthen individuals, families and communities.

Legislative Department – Broaden community awareness and input with regard to City Council activities, actions, and responsibilities through effective public community and involvement strategies by ensuring that the public, citizens and constituents will have more effective ways to be involved and to provide input to the City Council; City Councilmembers receive more timely and useful input and feedback from citizens and other constituents; and citizens have access to Councilmembers and receive prompt, satisfactory responses to inquiries.

Mayor – Provide City-wide leadership to help address and meet Seattle’s challenge of ‘growing with grace,’ and ensure the high quality and timely delivery of municipal services to Seattle citizens by increasing access and two-way communication between the Mayor’s Office and the public.

Municipal Court – Provide effective and efficient access to justice for citizens of Seattle by tracking access to justice consistent with national trial court performance standards as adopted by the court, and access to justice consistent with time to disposition standards as adopted by the court.

Neighborhoods – Decentralize the City’s programs and services, and coordinate across departments and with communities; facilitate neighborhood development consistent with community desires; and build a strong sense of community by supporting neighborhood self-help efforts. Neighborhood Planning is identified as a top City priority, and the proposed budget provides over \$24 million during the biennium for neighborhood plan implementation and the creation of six Seattle sectors. Funded activities include tripling the Neighborhood Matching Fund funding set-asides in four department budgets, the creation of an Early Implementation Fund and Opportunity Fund, allocating \$1 million annually from the Cumulative Reserve Subfund, and increased staffing. Other priorities include: Enlarging two Neighborhood Services Centers and moving toward six Little City Halls to provide a greater and more comprehensive range of City services to Seattle citizens and better coordination across departments, and assisting the community in completing self-help projects through the Neighborhood Matching Fund with a special emphasis on projects implementing neighborhood plans and celebrating the Millennium.

Parks – Provide highest quality recreation, leisure, and community services that meet the needs of youth and the community; expand and enhance the City’s parks and recreation system to support adopted City, department, and neighborhood plans; and carry out the department’s mission and promote excellent customer service by improving efficiency in service delivery and supporting our workforce.

Planning Commission - City policy and planning effectively ensures managed growth and high quality of life in the future for all Seattle residents; that City planning reflects the thoughts and desires of the people who live and work in Seattle and that they feel ownership in the City’s plans for the future by increasing effective involvement of Seattle residents in the City’s planning and decision-making process; foster an informed citizenry and decisions that are made in the best interests of the City and its residents. Complete review of neighborhood plans and participate in monitoring and assessing plan implementation, and engage citizens in celebrating accomplishments of neighborhood plans.

Public Health – Provide needed or mandated health services and prevention programs to address individual and community concerns, and control and reduce the exposure of individuals and communities to environmental or personal health hazards.

Public Safety – Develop shared responsibility and accountability for public safety through extended partnerships between the Seattle Police Department and citizens, other government agencies, and labor organizations. Increase number of citizens involved in public safety problem-solving, crime prevention and disaster preparedness (block watch, Chief’s Advisory Groups, etc.), and provide prompt, fair review of citizen complaints. Respond effectively and efficiently to the public safety needs of Seattle’s citizens. Provide timely response to emergency and non-emergency requests; reduce calls for service through effective problem-solving and community

policing efforts to maintain public order and civility; and measure satisfaction with problem-solving and community policing efforts through citizen survey.

Seattle Center – Maintain Seattle Center as the cultural and community heart of the City by improving service and ensuring safety. Expand quality programs celebrating Seattle’s diverse community and its youth and families.

Seattle Public Library – Provide high quality customer service through expanded hours, increased acquisition of Library resources, enhanced technology, and potential improved facilities, and maintain and improve a strong alliance with Seattle Public Schools to further common goals.

Seattle Public Utilities – Make positive contributions to the community and increase confidence in local government. Empower citizens to improve their environment through local citizens and youth who participate in SPU/City-sponsored programs, and citizens who participate in utility-sponsored neighborhood programs.

Seattle Transportation – Enhance mobility within Seattle to create a city of choices, and implement the objectives of Seattle’s neighborhood plans to help Seattle grow with grace.

Strategic Planning Office – Grow with grace by preserving the best qualities of Seattle’s distinct neighborhoods while responding positively and creatively to change, growth, and community development needs; address Seattle’s mobility and transportation needs in ways that promote a clean environment, smart growth strategies, excellent urban design, and maximized investment in neighborhoods; and ensure that Seattle students are safe, healthy, and ready to learn.

City of Seattle **Neighborhood Involvement Structure**

Department of Neighborhoods



City Neighborhood Council
Representative from each District Council

1. Recommend Neighborhood Matching Fund Projects to Mayor and City Council
2. Oversee Budget Priority Process
3. Implement Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program

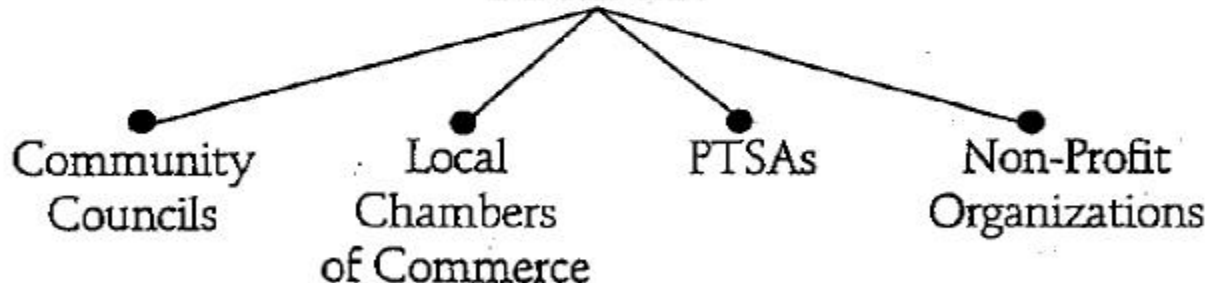


Thirteen District Councils

1. Rate Neighborhood Matching Fund Projects
2. Funnel for Budget Requests
3. Forum for Community Issues



**Representatives from Organizations
such as:**



APPENDIX 3

SELECTED LEGAL REFERENCES

CITATION	ADOPTED	SUMMARY
Resolution 25387	12/20/76	Establishing the general policy of the City of Seattle governing the provision of public information and opportunities for the participation of citizens in the formulation of policies, plans, and other decisions and actions; and directing preparation of procedures governing information and participation activities of City Departments.
Resolution 25718	12/27/77	Adopting City of Seattle policies for citizen participation in crime prevention/reduction programs.
Resolution 27513	04/06/87	Adopting the Policy Plan of the Department of Parks and Recreation, making the Seattle 2000 goals the foundation of the Plan, which includes "Citizen Participation: Approaches and Mechanisms."
Resolution 27709	10/26/87	Establishing a Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program for the City of Seattle, including creation of community service centers, neighborhood district councils and the City Neighborhood Council (CNC). It also mandates the creation of the Office of Neighborhoods as of 1/1/88, CNC involvement in the budget review process, expanding opportunities for neighborhood-generated planning, DC's to play advisory role in comprehensive plan updates, establishing the neighborhood matching fund, maintenance of a community organization list by DON, creation of an interdepartmental neighborhood coordinating committee (INCC).
Resolution 28115	12/18/89	Amended Resolution 27709 with "the intent of opening the Neighborhood Planning and Assistance Program to greater participation from all neighborhoods and races.
Resolution 28876	2/22/94	A RESOLUTION forming a Citizen's Capital Investment Committee to advise the City Council and the Mayor on a capital investment strategy and financing plan.
Resolution 28947	8/8/94	A RESOLUTION outlining a strategic capital investment process for the City's capital assets.
Ordinance 117255	8/8/94	AN ORDINANCE relating to capital projects funding, establishing a requirement that a fiscal note be prepared to accompany the funding proposal for any major new or expanded capital project.
RCW 35.22.288	NA	Requires cities to publish ordinances, and more importantly, requires cities to establish a procedure for notifying the public of upcoming hearings and the preliminary agenda for the forthcoming council meeting.
SMC 3.14.932	NA	The Seattle Commission for Sexual Minorities is to report on a semi-annual basis to the Mayor and City Council. The report "shall include" a briefing of the Commission's public involvement process for soliciting community and citizen input in developing its workplans.

CITATION	ADOPTED	SUMMARY
SMC Chapter 3.35	NA	Chapter Establishing Department of Neighborhoods SMC 3.35.010 and 3.35.030 specifically refer to citizen participation in “the processes of City government.” It is one of the stated purposes for the establishment of DON. The Director is also required to provide staff for the CNC and district councils, conduct outreach programs to “elicit citizen participation”, present neighborhood concerns to City departments, and of course, manage the Neighborhood Matching Fund.
SMC 3.66.010	NA	One of the Seattle-King County Youth Commission functions is to provide and coordinate “citizen input” for a comprehensive plan for youth services.
SMC 9.14.931(F)	NA	The Seattle Human Rights Commission is to report on a semi-annual basis to the Mayor and City Council. The report “shall include” a briefing of the Commission’s public involvement process for soliciting community and citizen input in developing its workplans. (This is the same language as found in SMC 3.14.932.)
Resolution 28757	8/30/93	A RESOLUTION calling for the establishment of an Early Project Implementation Program, Design Review Element, for the City of Seattle and the adoption of design review guidelines.
SMC Chapter 23.41	NA	Early Project Implementation (Design Review.)

¹ This bibliography is a selective sampling of resolutions, ordinances and statutes related to citizen participation in the City.

APPENDIX 4

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APPENDIX 5
EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

City of Seattle

Paul Schell, Mayor

Department of Neighborhoods

Jim Diers, Director

September 20, 1999

To: Eileen Norton

From: Jim Diers

Re: Report on Citizen Participation

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a response for the audit report on citizen participation. Because you did thorough research and gave me previous opportunities for input, I am relatively comfortable with the report's findings as I understand them. However, I believe that some clarification is necessary.

The report focuses on two citizen participation processes - the major maintenance budget process and neighborhood planning - neither of which has been led by the Department of Neighborhoods. The report also makes brief responses to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, leadership training, and neighborhood plan implementation, which are managed by our Department. It also mentions the Neighborhood Transportation Fund which is led by SeaTran. Each of these processes is quite different, so it would be helpful if the report did a better job of identifying its conclusions and recommendations with the specific processes that generated them.

For example, on page 3, an issue is raised about citizens having to expend too much effort for too few resources. It goes on to describe those resources as covering only one or two minor improvements per district. That sounds to me like a description of the Neighborhood Transportation Fund, but the failure to mention a specific process leaves the impression that the issue applies to all processes. I don't think that is the case.

Similarly, the next paragraph raises an issue about a disproportionate amount of resources going to City-driven rather than community-driven citizen participation processes. Which processes is this referring to? The bulk of the resources for citizen participation have gone to neighborhood planning and to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, both of which I would describe as community-driven. If these aren't the community-driven processes that are being referred to, what are?

The preceding issue needs clarification because it seems to be the basis for a recommendation that the Department of Neighborhoods should "conduct a cost benefit analysis of the existing neighborhood processes to determine whether the process steps and outcomes are reasonable in relation to the time, costs, and resources provided to accomplish City and neighborhood objectives." Again, which processes are in need of a cost benefit analysis? How would such an analysis be conducted? And, wouldn't it make sense for a more neutral party to conduct the analysis?

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Eileen Norton
September 20, 1999
Page 2

A related recommendation on page 2 is "promoting equity in allocating financial, education/training, and staff resources to neighborhoods to support City-initiated activities." Is this recommendation referring to the neighborhood planning program? If so, I would argue that it was appropriate to target the limited neighborhood planning resources to the neighborhoods undergoing the most change. If not neighborhood planning, what City activities does this recommendation refer to and what are some examples of the inequities? It will be difficult to implement this recommendation without a better understanding of the issues behind it.

I don't know if the major maintenance process was identified as one of those processes whose costs may outweigh its benefits but, given the concern that "application processes for neighborhood funds are labor intensive," I am puzzled by the recommendation to add another step to the major maintenance process. The report recommends that "CNC should conduct a cost effective validation process after the initial neighborhood district ballots are tallied to ensure that all community groups have an additional opportunity to provide input on the initial prioritized listing of major maintenance projects in their neighborhoods." I appreciate the intent of ensuring that district councils are accountable to their member organizations, but I believe that it would be more appropriate to provide adequate time and information at the front end of the process so that the grassroots neighborhood organizations can be in a position to give clear direction to their representatives on the District Council.

Otherwise, I am fairly comfortable with the report. I appreciate the acknowledgement that "the City and neighborhoods have a fine record of accomplishment and have established a very high standard for other local governments." Even so, I acknowledge that there is plenty of room for improvement in our model of citizen participation and believe that the report points us in the right direction.

The key recommendation seems to be the need to better integrate the various neighborhood advisory groups established by the City with one another and with the many types of grassroots community organizations in order to ensure optimal communication, accountability, and use of time. This is a good goal. However, it is not something that the City can do unilaterally. The focus of citizen participation needs to continue to be on the grassroots neighborhood organizations. One of the strengths of these organizations is their independence from the City, so the Department of Neighborhoods is not in a position to establish their roles and responsibilities or to require their representation on advisory groups. What we can do is continue to work with them to refine the City's model of citizen participation so that they are comfortable with it. I hope that the current Planning Commission study will result in some concrete suggestions to help us move in this direction.

Thank you for all of the good work that went into developing your report on citizen participation. I am hopeful that it will help us make a good program even better.

JD:Igd
h: @docsljim @corres991norton01.doc

505 14th Avenue East, #302
Seattle, WA 98112

September 23, 1999

City of Seattle Office of City Auditor
Ms. Susan Cohen, City Auditor
600 Fourth Avenue, 10th Floor
Municipal Building
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Cohen:

The City Auditor has taken on a great challenge in understanding the citizen participation process and has made solid recommendations on how we can improve our involvement and communication with the City of Seattle. I also commend the City of Seattle for making citizen participation a priority, and dedicating the Department of Neighborhoods to foster involvement and lend support. I am in support of your findings and encourage all neighborhood-based public involvement process wherever possible.

Your stated purpose was to study focuses on two citizen participation processes - neighborhood budgeting and neighborhood planning, and address fundamental issues regarding the Department of Neighborhood's public involvement structure and other issues relevant to City public involvement processes.

The complex study you have completed clearly details the many ways citizens participate in City supported programs, and explains multiple ways to improve accountability and partnering. You have also made several recommendations for the citizens involved with structured organizations, the Department of Neighborhoods, and the City of Seattle to work together to accomplish common goals.

As an active participant in neighborhood organizations I strongly agree with your first recommendation to encourage the Department of Neighborhoods to actively work with the City Neighborhood Council, District Councils and Neighborhood Planning Stewards to make structure improvements for accessibility and foster open communications.

The second recommendation discusses furthering the participation with all neighborhood groups even after the major maintenance projects have been approved, to give any citizen group the opportunity to discuss capital investments. This is a recommendation that I look forward to discussing with the Budget Committee of the CNC to understand how we can improve an exemplary process of citizen involvement

To further enhance the communication links between the neighborhood committees and community links, you have suggested that the Department of Neighborhoods, with their expertise and resourcefulness, help to clarify rolls and responsibilities and initiate new and improved processes. Additionally, I agree with your recommendation that the City provide the Department of Neighborhoods the resources to accomplish these ambitious goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your audit report on citizen participation. Your attention to detail and clearly, your time spent interviewing each department and citizen group, makes this comprehensive audit report show both the immediate improvements, and how we should work together for the long term improvement goals. The obvious relevancy of the citizen participation process was clearly demonstrated, and the City of Seattle should be acknowledged for its roll in establishing the structure and the support for this structure through the Department of Neighborhoods.

Respectfully,

Blake Gray

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APPENDIX 6

AUDITOR'S COMMENTS ON THE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOODS' RESPONSE

Although the Department of Neighborhoods' response to our citizen participation study indicates general concurrence with the report's findings, the response also suggests that further clarification of specific findings and recommendations would be beneficial. We sincerely appreciate the thoroughness of the Department of Neighborhoods' response and the opportunity to clarify our position.

Department Comment: *The report focuses on two citizen participation processes—the major maintenance budget process and neighborhood planning—neither of which has been led by the Department of Neighborhoods. The report also makes brief responses to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, leadership training, and neighborhood plan implementation, which are managed by our Department. It also mentions the Neighborhood Transportation Fund which is led by SeaTran. Each of these processes is quite different, so it would be helpful if the report did a better job of identifying its conclusions and recommendations with the specific processes that generated them.*

For example, on page 3 an issue is raised about citizens having to expend too much effort for too few resources. It goes on to describe those resources as covering only one or two minor improvements per district. That sounds to me like a description of the Neighborhood Transportation Fund, but the failure to mention a specific process leaves the impression that the issue applies to all processes.

Auditor Response: Audit staff did specifically refer to the Neighborhood Street Fund in the report (see page 13) as an example of a process that was perceived by citizens to require much effort for a limited amount of resources. Appendix 7 (newly added) contains a Department of Transportation briefing summary on the Neighborhood Street Fund that focuses on some process challenges and opportunities for improvement. The needed improvements have already been implemented. However, citizens' perceptions and comments on the City's high expectations and time requirements extended to numerous processes, including the award winning Neighborhood Matching Fund process and the successful neighborhood planning process.

Department Comment: *Similarly, the next paragraph raises an issue about a disproportionate amount of resources going to City-driven rather than community-driven citizen participation processes. Which processes is this referring to? The bulk of the resources for citizen participation have gone to neighborhood planning and to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, both of which I would describe as community-driven. If these aren't the community-driven processes that are being referred to, what are?*

Auditor Response: The Department of Neighborhoods describes the Neighborhood Matching Fund and neighborhood planning processes as community-driven processes, while some neighborhood representatives describe the processes as City-driven because of the level of City

management and staff involvement in the processes. Certainly, each process requires a highly collaborative effort by both City personnel and neighborhood representatives. The Department's response correctly states that the "bulk" of the City's citizen participation resources have been invested in the Neighborhood Matching Fund and the neighborhood planning process, which created a perception of inequity among some CNC and District Council representatives.

Department Comment: *The preceding issue needs clarification because it seems to be the basis for a recommendation that the Department of Neighborhoods should "conduct a cost benefit analysis of the existing neighborhood processes to determine whether the process steps and outcomes are reasonable in relation to the time, costs, and resources provided to accomplish City and neighborhood objectives." Again, which processes are in need of a cost benefit analysis? How would such an analysis be conducted? And, wouldn't it make sense for a more neutral party to conduct the analysis?*

Auditor Response: The recommendation regarding the cost benefit analysis stems not only from the perceived inequity in the allocation of financial and staff resources to various citizen involvement processes, but is also related to the concerns raised by citizens about the demands on their time and the value of the benefits associated with their investment. City officials and management have raised similar concerns about the costs and time demands associated with "all" or select citizen involvement processes.

We recognize that a cost benefit analysis for citizen participation processes would be an enormous undertaking if all City's processes were analyzed concurrently, and note that the Planning Commission is wisely focusing its current citizen participation review on select processes. The Department of Neighborhoods participated actively in developing the scope of work for the Planning Commission study, and would be knowledgeable about which processes should be given priority for review. The Department of Neighborhoods gained new personnel in 1999 with the financial and analytic expertise to develop an effective model for analyzing the costs and benefits of various citizen participation processes.

Department Comment: *A related recommendation on page 2 is "promoting equity in allocating financial, education/training, and staff resources to neighborhoods to support City-initiated activities." Is this recommendation referring to the neighborhood planning program? If so, I would argue that it was appropriate to target the limited neighborhood planning resources to the neighborhoods undergoing the most change. If not neighborhood planning, what City activities does this recommendation refer to and what are some examples of the inequities? It will be difficult to implement this recommendation without a better understanding of the issues behind it.*

Auditor Response: We agree that it was appropriate to target City planning resources to the neighborhoods undergoing the most change. However, some neighborhood group representatives outside the designated urban villages perceive the resources allocated to both the neighborhood planning and implementation processes as substantial rather than "limited." These representatives would prefer that future neighborhood planning implementation efforts become more integrated with the existing neighborhood involvement structure. The Mayor's initiative to

create six sectors to provide a more integrated City response by area¹ was perceived to be an important step in that direction.

Department Response: *I don't know if the major maintenance process was identified as one of those processes whose costs may outweigh its benefits but, given the concerns that "application proceses for neighborhood funds are labor intensive," I am puzzled by the recommendation to add another step to the major maintenance process. The report recommends that the "CNC should conduct a cost effective validation process after the initial neighborhood district ballots are tallied to ensure that all community groups have an additional opportunity to provide input on the initial prioritized listing of major maintenance projects in their neighborhoods." I appreciate the intent of ensuring that District Councils are accountable to their member organizations, but I believe that it would be more appropriate to provide adequate time and information at the front end of the process so that grass roots organizations can be in a position to give clear direction to their representatives on the District Council.*

Auditor Comment: We agree that timely communications between City departments and all neighborhood/grass roots groups is highly desirable and crucial to the District Councils' ability to represent community interests effectively. However, the strong desire for accountability appeared to be equally important to community representatives. The neighborhood budgeting model, with an appropriate validation step, provides a "furnish proof" mechanism for neighborhood groups to simply and cost effectively convey their priorities to the District Councils and City departments after the appropriate informational meetings and discussions have occurred within the community. As noted in our review of neighborhood planning, a biennial "voting" process could also be a useful mechanism to confirm neighborhood implementation priorities during future budget processes because neighborhood priorities (as well as major maintenance priorities) will change over time.

Again, the Auditor's Office sincerely appreciates the Department of Neighborhoods' constructive response to the citizen participation study, and the excellent cooperation received throughout our review process.

¹"Giving Neighborhoods a Real Say," The New Public Innovator (Winter 1999), p. 23. (Please see Appendix 8.)

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APPENDIX 7

Briefing for Transportation Committee Neighborhood Street Fund September 16, 1997

The Neighborhood Street Fund serves as an example of how the Transportation Department is working more closely with the community. In the previous years, the Neighborhood Street Fund implemented priorities specified in recently adopted Neighborhood Plans. This year, the \$500,000 of Neighborhood Street Fund were distributed City wide.

The City Neighborhood Council assumed the large task of developing and running this year's process, including:

- Allocating funds per district based on travel demand
- Developing the timeline, parameters, and application letter
- Sponsoring a workshop
- Creating a process to prioritize the projects
- Attending all the district meetings to help them run a fair process
- Putting together the final prioritization list (see attachment)

The process resulted in the Districts prioritizing almost 2 million dollars worth of projects.

SEATRAN's review resulted in their contributing well over \$107,000 to further extend the \$500,00. Although the process was largely successful, challenges were encountered, including:

- Districts' activity varied including one district that had been inactive.
- Most neighborhoods do not have projects developed or priorities set.
- The short timeline affected both the community process and SEATRAN review.
- Districts have trouble prioritizing without understanding how bad a problem it is, what the appropriate solution is, and how much the solution will cost.

SEATRAN plans to reduce or eliminate the concerns in collaboration with the CNC and District Council representatives through the following actions:

- The CNC will work with District Councils to help them get organized.
- SEATRAN will work with the CNC and district representatives to refine the process.
- The next round will start in January.
- Chapter 2 of Making Streets That Work will be reproduced; the option of requiring applicants to receive preliminary approval from SEATRAN will be explored, and applicants will be encouraged to attend a workshop organized by the CNC.

SEATRAN should be able to get most of the projects designed this year, construction will start in 1998.

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